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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

ON a recent bright day, we made a journey to the World's Fair expressly to revisit the Underground World Home, which has come to haunt our dreams. This structure, or excavation, is the ultimate article in fallout shelters, being a richly appointed ten-room burrow with a steel double door. It is buried, like a qualifying footnote, under an archway that proclaims the theme of the Fair to be "Peace Through Understanding." On the whole, it is an anomalous piece of domestic architecture, combining the small, familiar pleasures of the hearth with the headier excitements of Doomsday. It will not suit every temperament. It does not suit ours. After our first visit, in fact, we were baffled when we attempted to guess at the quirks of character that might fit one to live contentedly in the Underground World, shut away from all the extraordinary visions that sunlight affords. We therefore put our imagination and sympathies to the stretch and tried to fit ourselves into the role. And so began our haunting.

At first, we managed very well. We could picture ourselves, as the hypothetical householder, throwing open the window, some ten feet beneath the sod, in order to enjoy the quadruply filtered, comfort-conditioned artificial breeze, and to admire the patently bogus landscape that spread itself inches beyond the very real sash. After several deep and bracing breaths of this denatured air, we might audaciously decide to pop up to the surface for a fast game of croquet, if the international situation appeared to justify the risk. Then down we would scuttle again, exhilarated by our bold expedition to the world's spicy surface, and lock our door and inspect every room and hug ourselves in the snug security of our warren. At this point in our reverie, though, trouble always set in. Were we *really* secure? Something nibbled at our memory of

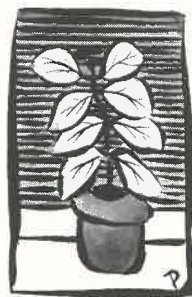
that first visit. We dimly sensed an unauthorized twist in the labyrinth, a tiny chink in the carapace, through which death—or life—might enter to cheat our precautions.

So the other day we returned to the Underground World Home and began a slow and careful examination of it, fairly pestering the guides with questions. At every point, protection appeared absolute. We were told, for example, that a system of windowpanes buried in the ground and encased in concrete offered perfect security against Peeping Toms. We had not considered this advantage before. Nevertheless, our vague misgivings persisted. We peered and prodded, queried and squinted, and at last, when we arrived at the underground patio, the revelation came. We found a group of fellow-tourists there, reclining on paradoxical outdoor furniture and gazing with unimaginable speculation at plastic flowers festooning the trellis overhead. They looked like neighbors come to a nether-world barbecue. Our diffuse suspicions sharpened to a point. We hunted up a guide. Was there, we asked, any discreet, indirect contrivance—some clever arrangement of mirrors, perhaps—that would enable the householder to learn the state of the world without leaving his burrow? The guide answered that there was not—that the householder, to satisfy his curiosity, must openly emerge and baldly peer. Here, surely, was the flaw we had dimly sensed. We imagined our householder, having switched on a pleasant evening on his window sill, browsing contentedly through the pages of "Humanoids," by Jack Williamson—a book we had observed in the shelter's library. There comes a knock at the door. Amiably, he lays his book aside and rises to answer. Then he stops, in sudden perplexity and distress. The knock is re-

peated and repeated, but he doesn't stir. For he has no way of knowing, poor gopher, whether that rapping signals only the arrival of a neighbor on an ordinary visit, who must be greeted with hospitality, or whether it announces the more desperate arrival of a neighbor seeking refuge from the ultimate catastrophe, who must, of course, be denied entrance. Here is a fault indeed. On behalf of our imaginary householder, then, we urge the designer of the shelter, Mr. Jay Swayze, to provide it with a good working periscope, so that mistakes can be avoided. We were pleased, as we stood in the buried patio, to have discovered so easy a remedy for the anxieties of our imaginary householder, and still more pleased to dismiss him from our mind.

We left the Underground World Home—forever, we trust—by way of the steel shelter doors and climbed a flight of stairs to emerge, blinking, into the light of common day. We continue to believe that this is the light by which, at last, we all must learn to see.

Barman



WITH the exception of Maxfield Parrish, who will be ninety-four next week, and who is currently being honored with an exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art, M. Fernand Petiot, the head bartender of the St. Regis, has been continuously exposed to the art of Maxfield Parrish longer than anyone else, since for three decades he has been making drinks in the immediate vicinity of Parrish's ten-by-thirty-foot mural "Old King Cole." "I came to this country, and to the St. Regis, in 1933, from the Savoy, in London," he told us when we sidled into the ambience of his, and Parrish's, *œuvre* before business hours the other morning. The celebrated mural, we learned, was painted in 1906,

for the grill of the then new Knickerbocker Hotel, an Astor property. During prohibition, the hotel was converted into an office building, and Vincent Astor moved the King to the Racquet and Tennis Club; following repeal, he transferred him to the St. Regis, another Astor property. M. Petiot, who was born in Paris six years before Old King Cole was born in Cornish, Vermont, will terminate his royal association at the end of this year, when he expects to retire, at least from the St. Regis, and write a book of cocktail recipes. "I initiated the Bloody Mary of today," he told us. "George Jessel said he created it, but it was really nothing but vodka and tomato juice when I took it over. I cover the bottom of the shaker with four large dashes of salt, two dashes of black pepper, two dashes of cayenne pepper, and a layer of Worcestershire sauce; I then add a dash of lemon juice and some cracked ice, put in two ounces of vodka and two ounces of thick tomato juice, shake, strain, and pour. We serve from a hundred to a hundred and fifty Bloody Marys a day here in the King Cole Room and in the other restaurants and the banquet rooms."

According to M. Petiot, who has a staff of seventeen barmen under him, the mixed drink most popular at the hotel is the Martini. "We serve from two hundred to three hundred a day," he said. "We beat them very strongly and serve them very cold. The ice must be solid. Home Martinis are sometimes inferior because hollow ice cubes are used; they melt too fast.

Women used to drink things like Clover Clubs, but today they like Martinis, and like them just as dry as the men do, or even drier. I make Martinis seven to one—Gordon's gin and Noilly Prat vermouth. Dry Manhattans and Rob Roys are picking up. Scotch is always in demand, and we have a hundred and thirty-five different Scotches. We serve around a million drinks a year. We used to sell a good many Side Cars and champagne cocktails, but mixed drinks with brandy are too expensive now. We have to charge two dollars or more for them. So many nice things are dying."

M. Petiot wears rimless glasses and looks like a genial college professor. He married at eighteen, and he and his wife, who live in Jackson Heights, have two sons, five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. His parents ran a sixty-room *pension de famille* on the Rue Chalgrin, in Paris. In his early teens, he helped out in his mother's kitchen after school. When he was sixteen, he joined the staff of Harry's New York Bar, on the Rue Daunou, as a kitchen boy. "During the First World War, the American doughboys who came in called me the Frog," he said. "The nickname was a friendly one. I acted as their banker. Sailors on shore leave sometimes handed me envelopes containing as much as two hundred dollars and instructed me never to give them more than ten dollars a day, no matter *what* they said. Mrs. Mary Duke Biddle brought me to the St. Regis; she owned it at the time. Vincent Astor foreclosed on her a year later.

He generally lunched here, and he was a great Martini drinker. He liked rum, but it was mostly Martinis and Scotches. I made his cocktails from 1933 until his death, in 1959." Besides making or supervising the making of the St. Regis's drinks, the military banker of yesteryear runs the hotel's beverage department and draws up the lists for its wine cellars.

We asked him for the favorite drinks of a few living customers, and a day or two later he sent us the following list:

Rex Harrison—Americano.
 Quentin Reynolds—Bull Shot.
 Broderick Crawford—Vodka and 7-Up.
 Jack Topping—Perrier and orange juice.
 Billy Talbert—Beer.
 Phil Harris—Bourbon.
 Pat O'Brien—Red Snapper.
 Peter Duchin—Bloody Mary.
 Mel Allen—Scotch-on-the-rocks.
 Peter Donald—House of Lords Martini.
 Arthur Fiedler—Bourbon Old-Fashioned.
 Gates Davison—Vodka Martini.
 Salvador Dali—Vichy Celestin and orange juice.
 Ava Gardner—Martini and Scotch-on-the-rocks.
 Joe DiMaggio—Scotch.
 Darryl Zanuck—Perrier and Dubonnet or Carpano.
 Dan Topping—Scotch.
 John McClain—Martini.
 Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.—Martini.

THE Newton, Massachusetts, police force has a bright-blue station wagon equipped with a siren, flashing lights, and other conspicuous indications that it is not an ordinary vehicle. Clearly lettered on its side is "Plainclothes Division."

Frank Exchange

UNDER the sponsorship of a couple of charitable foundations attached to the Corning Glass Works, a week-long private conference of twenty-five prominent Africans was recently held in the pleasing small town of Corning, in the pleasing green heart of the pleasing vast State of New York. The subject discussed was "Training for Leadership," and since it's hard to think of any subject more vital to the future of Africa, the confer-



"After all the times I waited for you when you were late!"